



Big Sky Rx Factsheet

Big Sky Rx is a prescription drug assistance program for Montanans on Medicare. The program pays for all, or part, of Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan (PDP) premiums for eligible Montanans. Part D plans are purchased from private insurance companies and Big Sky Rx will pay up to \$34.61 per month of the premium.

In 2005, Big Sky Rx was created when voters overwhelmingly approved an increase in tobacco taxes to pay for prescription drug assistance for seniors. This valuable program reduces health care costs and increases the quality of life of low income seniors. Big Sky Rx has become a popular and essential program for Montana's seniors.

- **Big Sky Rx helps some of our neediest seniors pay for prescription drugs.** Big Sky Rx currently helps almost 11,000 seniors pay for Medicare Part D Rx coverage. Half of the recipients of Big Sky Rx are living on the edge of the Federal Poverty Level, which means a couple participating in the program has an annual salary of \$30,260 or much less. A limited income makes it extremely hard for Montana's seniors to afford their medications. Average out of pocket costs for Medicare beneficiaries in 2011 are estimated to be \$5,114 per person. For a couple the average medical costs consume over 1/3 or almost 1/2 of their total income. Without Big Sky Rx, couples on Medicare will have to pay \$830.64 per year for the Part D premium or they will most likely go without the medicines they need.
- **Big Sky Rx saves money.** Montanans without drug coverage will either pay full retail price or go without medicine, which increases their chance of expensive critical care or drains their financial resources. Patients who cut pills or don't fill subscription have higher rates of hospitalization and may account for wasting around 13% of total health care expenditures, according to the New England Healthcare Institute. If our seniors are forced to drain their savings on prescription drugs and health care, they will eventually qualify for Medicaid. Big Sky Rx has saved Montana Medicaid money because we have been able to help keep seniors be financially stable so they can afford medication and meet their other financial obligations.

For more information on Big Sky Rx go to www.dphhs.mt.gov/prescriptiondrug/bigsky or call 1-866-369-1233.